

Public Hearing on Wireless Facilities Bill Eliminating Public Input and Superseding Local Government Rights to be held February 21 in Annapolis

Gaithersburg, Md. (February 15, 2019) A public hearing will be held on Thursday, February 21, for [House Bill 654](#). As written, the bill represents a coordinated, national effort by the telecommunications industry to prevent public input and limit local government authority over the installation of small cell equipment and poles in the public right of way. Public testimony will be heard by the Economic Matters Committee starting at 1 p.m. in the House Office Building, Room 230, Annapolis, MD.

Gaithersburg is part of a Community Coalition and the **Coalition Bills (SB 713 and HB 1020)** would allow state and local governments to utilize their zoning and permitting process, including public hearings, to determine the best location for 5G infrastructure and to control what goes in their rights-of-way and controls who has access to these areas, both in urban and residential areas. Public testimony will be heard by the Economic Matters Committee on the industry and coalition bills starting at 1 p.m. in the House Office Building, Room 230, Annapolis, MD

Small cell wireless antennas and equipment are used by the telecommunications industry to increase network coverage and capacity. While the City of Gaithersburg recognizes that enhancements are necessary as our society becomes more and more reliant on electronic devices, it is critically important that City residents and local government officials play an integral part in making decisions about the location and design of these small cell facilities.

The City of Gaithersburg strongly opposes this legislation and is working to protect its resident's voices regarding installation decisions to ensure that they work for the community, protect our neighborhoods and allow local government oversight. If passed, this Bill would allow for the installation of poles up to 50 feet in height and equipment boxes up to 28 cubic feet throughout the City, including residential neighborhoods.

The City urges residents to contact committee members to express **opposition to HB 654** and **support for SB 713/HB 1020**. A letter template is provided at www.gaithersburgmd.gov. House Bill 654 is sponsored by [Delegate Dereck Davis](#), Chair of the [Economic Matters Committee](#). Residents are also encouraged to contact District 17 Senator [Cheryl Kagan](#) and Delegates [Kumar Barve](#), [James Gilchrist](#) and [Julie Palakovich Carr](#).

In its deliberations on the issue of small cell facilities, Gaithersburg has been seeking to balance advances in technology and federal regulations with the municipal needs, neighborhood integrity and concerns of City residents.

After a series of public meetings and its own public hearings, the Gaithersburg Mayor and City Council adopted ordinance and regulation amendments related to small cell facilities in December 2017. The amendments better define how telecommunications facilities can be installed in rights of way, clarify the zoning and installation requirements, and create special rules allowing staff approvals for certain installations that have limited impact. State legislation as proposed by HB 654 would supersede these ordinances and regulations.

For more information, please contact Legislative Affairs Manager Monica Marquina at 240-805-1090, monica.marquina@gaithersburgmd.gov.